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No. 30.

THE SILENCE OF LIFE.

WRITTEN FOR THE SATURDAY EVENING POST,
BY GLEN CAROL.

Are, writing and hands above your head:
There is left but one for earth's fire and shrill:
Not give God thanks while your tears drop fast,
That between you and the giver of life,
You have golden memories heaped high—
Words brimming over with tenderness,
Times that were tender, looks that were kinder
Than ever again your heart shall know.

In the past's deep caress for you are set
Jewels that queens might crave in vain—
Things that will pale not in all the years
That may pass over you and the giver again.
What though your home be but a humble one,
And only the semblance of his face
Smiles down on you from the picture wall?
Though your idol be struck from his household
Place—

Your dead is yours. No truce of time
Shall sever the gold in his sunny hair—
He is yours, unchanged as the years drift on—
Forever young, and forever fair.
Then, kneeling beside his empty chair,
Thank God that he rotes from earth's sharp strife,
And that never, never between you can fall,
Wider than death, the silence of life.

RAVENSWOOD;

OR,

The Raftsmen Of The Delaware.

WRITTEN FOR THE SATURDAY EVENING POST,
BY BURR THORNBURY.

CHAPTER XXII.

"THE ABYSSAINS CAME DOWN."

The very hour that Edith Williams stood on the lonely river-shore by the raftsmen's camp-fire, telling the story of her seizure by ruffian hands and her subsequent imprisonment and escape, Flossie Gordon, once more in the power of her pretended uncle, was being conveyed up the Delaware. Determined at every hazard to possess himself of the person of the unfortunate girl, after a considerable period of futile watching—his object being to seize her without creating an alarm that would prevent his safe retreat with his victim—accompanied by daring assistants, he had boldly entered the residence of Friend Williams and carried her off as a wolf might a lamb from the fold.

The act was unparalleled in its impudent audacity. Mourning and desolation were upon the household because of the absence of Edith, whom it was now feared, since lengthened search had proved unavailing, might never be seen again.

The male members of the family, except Friend Williams himself and the serving-boy already referred to, were absent. Consequently the bold movement of the abduction was unobserved, and Flossie was borne away in triumph.

But Tim, the serving-boy, though frightened almost out of his wits by the fierce and sudden intrusion, recovered himself in time to sound an alarm. Friend Williams had been seized and bound at the first, to prevent any interference on his part.

It happened that a party of fishermen who were about putting off from shore to set their night-nets, had witnessed the hurried embarkation of the abductees with their prisoner. Thinking that something was wrong, the fishermen were about to abandon their task to ascertain the truth of the matter, when they were freshly incited thereto by the appearance of the distracted Tim, who gave them an incoherent account of what had occurred. Had not the knowledge of the recent similar outrage that had been perpetrated been fresh in their minds it is probable that the fishermen would have been slower to act, deeming the boy demented. As it was they instantly directed their boat toward the retreating miscreants.

The fishermen were unarmed, while it was probable that the others carried weapons, but this consideration did not cause them to hesitate in the pursuit. They hoped that the villains to save themselves, when the shore was reached, would abandon their captive, and that their rescue would thus be effected without a conflict.

Irvin Gaines saw with considerable alarm the vigorous approach of the pursuing party. Their boat—a double-oared bateau, long and light—was gaining rapidly upon his heavier craft. But night was drawing its concealing shadows around, and in the unusual gloom—the sky being heavily overcast with clouds—he hoped to escape, and with his victim.

"Pull, men, pull!" he shouted. "Every stroke of your oars is money for you. Get off safely this time, and I won't ask any more such service of you. We've been mighty bold, and it won't do to carry things this high long. But we must win this time. Pull, men, I say!"

"We're doing our best, sir," panted one of the oarsmen.

"And you're doing well, though these chaps are pressing us hard. Hi! gal, do you know what's going on?"

He addressed this question to Flossie, who was retreating after the harsh treatment she had been subjected to during her transfer to the boat.

She did not reply to his taunting query, though she comprehended her situation.

"Silence, eh? or maybe a little lustered yet," he said coarsely. "How do you like going back to the hills?"

Still she was silent, and her persecutor gave her attention to the pursuing boats.

"They'll overtake us," he cried, more alarmed than he had been before. "If we land, we can't get away with the gal, and you can't hold out much longer up stream. Our best chance is on the water. We can keep these chaps at bay with our pistols until deeper darkness gives us a chance to get off entirely. What do you say to a little trickery, men? Turn down stream and let the boat drift while we use our weapons. It will be easier for you, and we'll soon be hid in the darkness."



THE FISHERMEN PURSUING IRVIN GAINES'S BOAT.

Acting upon his suggestion, the worried oarsmen turned their craft, and let the current bear it downward. The forms of the pursuing fishermen were still dimly visible in the gloom, and this change of tactics on the part of the villains brought the boats near each other.

"Keep off, or we'll fire upon you," shouted Gaines to his would-be assailants.

The situation was decidedly an awkward one to the pursuers. They knew that the threat they had heard was no unmeaning one, and they could not approach closer without exposing some of their number to certain death. Hardly knowing what measure of offence to adopt, they also turned their boat, drifting abreast of their foes, but at a respectful distance from them.

But this could now no longer continue. The darkness became almost total, and rain began to fall. The opposing craft were hidden from each other, and each party was forced to attend to its own preservation, for with the shrieking gloom came the danger of drifting into rapids and being overturned in the water.

The only thing for pursuers and pursued—if such they could still be termed—to do, was for each to strike out in the darkness for shore.

Gaines naturally supposed that his enemies would return to the Pennsylvania side, as they had come from that. He wished also to land there himself, but he did not desire to fall in with his late persecutors, whom he concluded would not at once abandon their object.

The position of the villains was a very uncomfortable one. Had not this, to them, unfortunate interruption occurred, they would have reached a point where their waiting confederates would have received them, as had been previously arranged, and their flight would then have been continued with greater safety and directness by land.

Now all was altered, and they were profoundly distressed, as they deserved to be, at the uncertainty of their position.

"Strike out to the right, men," Gaines directed at last. "If I have calculated rightly, we're a little above Eagle Isle, and if we strike it we'll rest there awhile. This is damned good going."

After a brief pull at the oars, the boat was suddenly stopped in its progress by running against a sandy shore.

"It is as I thought," muttered Gaines. Then more confidently he said aloud: "This is the safe place, I'm sure of it. We'll stay here awhile, perhaps till morning, if nothing better shows. Curse the luck, I say. If we're forced to stay here we can at least have shelter—there's an old mill, as you know, on the place, and we can find it, I think, with a little trouble."

Groping their way in the gloom, after considerable difficulty they reached the shelter of the mill. The building itself was a mere wreck, having been partly swept away by a freshet several years before, and never repaired since. But it afforded a protection against the storm.

The tale on which Flossie and her abductors now were of very limited area, and lay only a short distance to the northward of Ravenswood. It had the reputation of being haunted, and was seldom visited unless by desperate parties.

Irvin Gaines was well satisfied to have an evil name attached to the spot, as it would deter the superstitious fishermen from exploring it. The villainous organization of which he was a member had frequently used the tale as a ruse, and on their map of the river region it held an important place. As for the ghosts, neither Gaines nor his companion-rogues cared a twig; their fears were regarding the more palpable spirits of law and justice.

The rain was now falling in torrents, descending in broad, gusty sweeps, and it began to be apprehended that the old mill would prove very inadequate shelter against the fury of the storm.

A more distressing situation than that of our heroine's could not well be imagined. Wet, terrified, despairing; in the power of cruel foes; fearful that the morrow would bring her additional miseries—she could only

offer a silent prayer to God, and patiently wait the coming of the dawn.

Irvin Gaines was disposed to exult over his victim, dubious as was his own situation, and apprehensive as he was of trouble ere he could get back to his haunts.

"Aren't you glad to see me, niece?" he said, in a taunting tone, "or hear me, rather, for you can't make out much with your eyes. But you know I am here—ain't that a comfort? You've given me a heap of trouble since the night you first showed your hand against me. But you can't escape me, gal; I'm bound to carry you from this, dead or alive."

He lowered his voice to a fierce hissing whisper as he uttered this threat.

Flossie shuddered, but remained silent.

"You have nothing to say," he continued. "Maybe I can tell you a thing or two that will interest you. I suppose there is weeping and wailing over yonder where we found you. Not so much because you are gone as on account of that other shiny-haired young lady. Now where do you imagine she is? I saw her lately."

Flossie was indeed interested now.

"You saw her—you saw Edith, you say. Was it you that tore her from her peaceful home? Oh, you cannot know what misery you have brought to kindest hearts! What object could you have had in so doing? Oh, restore her, I beg of you, to her friends; whatever you may cause me to suffer, permit her to go free."

"Well, now!" exclaimed Gaines in a tone of mock admiration. "This here beats all. You appeal to her, and she for you. That's what I call disinter-est-edness—pure self-sacrifice." The emphasis was astounding. "You two must be a sort of female Damon and Pyth—what's his name?—the English Reader talks about 'em. How you must love each other!"

"Tell me of Edith," pleaded Flossie. "Is she well? is she safe?"

"Yes, safe enough, I reckon," he answered grimly.

"You surely would not harm her? You will not keep her long from her parents? Have you no heart? have you no pity?"

"Yes, I have, gal—sometimes. I'll tell you about this friend of yours. You see we made a mistake in taking her; you was the one we wanted."

An involuntary expression of astonishment and comprehension escaped the lips of Flossie.

"You understand," said Gaines.

"Yes, yes, and you will release Edith, will you not?"

"Just as soon as we get you safely off. What do we want with her? It's you that's precious to us—to me. Ha! ha!"

The poor girl in her despair was glad that the morning hours of her friends would be relieved. Thus even in its saddest extremity came a noble soul rejoice at the happiness of others.

Edith would be restored to home and friends, thought the generous Flossie; but for herself—alas! alas!

For hours that dreary night, wakeful and weary, she listened to the roar of the rain and the river, striving to forget the wretchedness and loneliness of her situation.

The storm raged with unabated fury. Gaines and his companions grew more and more alarmed at the aspect of matters. A terrible fear grew upon them. What if the excessive rain should cause the river to overflow the levee? They knew that it had been before submerged; that even an ordinary rise of the water inundated all but the more elevated spot on which the mill stood. A freshet like that which must result if the rain continued, would doubtless float the whole structure off.

They groped their way to the shore and assured themselves that their boat was safe—drawing it far up on the sandy bank.

They feared to put off in the darkness for the main land, and they feared to remain. They felt themselves environed by dangers, and began to doubt that a way of escape would open.

Thus passed the remaining hours of night—the rain still coming down in floods—and

with anxious eyes they beheld the faint approaches of the tempestuous dawn.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ON THE ISLAND.

It is time we learned something more of our friend Starway. While the events recorded in the preceding chapters were taking place, he lay helpless and suffering at Ravenswood.

Mrs. Montgomery had resolved that Philip Wayne, notwithstanding Dr. Kirke's suggestion, should not be invited to attend his wounded friend. If Philip, hearing of the occurrence, came to the island to see the sufferer, as he would be likely to, she could not prevent that. But she concluded that it might be better for her own interests and those of her daughter if the two remained apart.

As we know, the effort in which Starway came near losing his life, happened the night of the abduction of Edith Williams. Philip Wayne at that time was absent from the neighborhood—and when he returned, it was to depart immediately, as we also know, in company with Frank Leighton, to assist in a further and more extended search for the lost one.

At Friend Williams's he briefly learned that Starway lay at Ravenswood, seriously wounded, and though he greatly desired to go to him, there was hardly time for such action, under the pressing necessities of the matter in hand.

As the wounded man was by this time reported convalescent, Philip concluded that he would not visit him, but explain and make amends for his apparent neglect afterward. He knew that the generous Starway would readily pardon his apparent indifference when the facts were learned.

Dr. Kirke, that stern eye which proved so eventful to the heroes of our story, was at the bedside of his patient. His skill had been made very late, as other demands upon his services that day had occupied much of his time. After he had noted the condition of the sufferer and seen with gladness that the signs of recovery were favorable and strong, he turned to leave the room, first bidding Starway a kindly good-night.

At the very entrance of the apartment a servant met him with the intelligence that Mrs. Montgomery desired to see him at once in the library.

He descended directly to the designated room. The lady was there awaiting his appearance.

"How is your patient this evening, doctor?" she inquired.

"I find him greatly improved. In a short time he may be removed with safety, if that is desired."

"Do you think that he is able to see visitors?" she inquired, rather anxiously, ignoring the latter part of his reply.

"Yes; but why do you ask? Has any one called at this hour?"

"Philip Wayne and Frank Leighton are both in the sitting-room with Irene, having returned this far from their unsuccessful search for Edith Williams. They were grieved over from the Jersey side, and touched here to see the wounded man. They are both friends of his, you know."

"Yes, I am aware of that, and it will do him good to see them."

"Are you quite sure? Will not the interview excite him too much?" The solicitude of Mrs. Montgomery was unmistakable.

"I will prepare him for it beforehand, and thus prevent the result you apprehend."

"But, doctor, persisted she, "would it not be well to permit but one of them to see him? Mr. Leighton, I would name. Mr. Wayne, though I doubt not he desires to see his friend, would readily upon your intimation that the interview had better be deferred—deny himself that pleasure."

"Yes, I do not fear any undesirable result if they are both admitted to his presence, Mrs. Montgomery," said the physician with slight surprise.

"If you think it well I have no objection to raise," she answered, yielding the point that she had secretly desired to maintain.

"Will you join the young men? They are

in the sitting-room. Mr. Leighton is very dejected—and no wonder, poor fellow! His present trial is indeed a terrible one; but I am not one of those who think that Edith will never be found."

The cool-headed dissembler had excellent reason for this cheerful opinion, though the doctor knew it not. The events recorded in the preceding chapters were taking place, he lay helpless and suffering at Ravenswood.

"I trust that the bereaved family will not suffer much longer from the loss of their darling," said Dr. Kirke as the two went out. "But I am very much concerned about the matter. It grows more and more distressing and mysterious."

They entered the sitting-room.

Dr. Kirke greeted the young men cordially, though his serious countenance and sympathetic manner showed that he was aware of the discouraging result of their late efforts to find the missing Edith.

Philip, as a matter of course, inquired as to the condition of Starway, though he had already learned from the ladies that he was still improving.

Dr. Kirke soon left the room, saying that he would go and announce to his patient the presence of the visitors. He shortly returned, and Frank and Philip were conducted to the chamber of the sufferer.

We pass over the interview, leaving our readers to surmise that Starway was rejoiced to behold his young friends, as they were to see him, except that they lamented his misfortune.

No reference was made to any exciting subject—to the abduction of Edith Williams, nor to the circumstances connected with Mrs. Wilburton. Starway rested in ignorance of these painful matters. Of the latter, Frank and Philip were as yet uninformed. He inquired about Flossie, and wondered, since she must have heard of his injury, why she had not been to see him. Philip reasoned that kept her away.

The alarm that had been occasioned by her daring abduction had not, as it happened, reached Ravenswood, nor had the exciting twilight chase been witnessed by any one on the island. The wild news was flying from house to house, but chance directed that Philip Wayne was to be spared the knowledge that kept her away.

When the three descended from Starway's chamber it was quite late, and the rain was falling heavily.

"You will not go to the mainland to-night," said Mrs. Montgomery, hospitably.

"The crossing will be dark and disagreeable, and Ravenswood offers you shelter."

They all looked thoughtful. The passage to the other shore would indeed be uncomfortable, not to say dangerous.

"I have nothing cheering to convey to Edith's parents," said Frank Leighton very sadly, "or I would not be deterred by the storm and darkness. As it is, the anxiety and suspense in which they rest are better than the despair that must fill their hearts to-morrow."

Mrs. Montgomery looked her commiseration as she said:

"Then you will remain?"

"As Philip says," was his answer, as he turned inquiringly to his companion.

Philip thought of Flossie. It had been his intention to proceed to Friend Williams's that night—but now, with no mitigation of his desire to see his betrothed, he reconsidered his determination.

"Since you are so kind as to invite us to remain till morning," he said to their hostess, "and as this is my first visit to my wounded friend, we will—Frank and I, at least—accept your hospitality."

"And you, Dr. Kirke?" said Mrs. Montgomery, with more of decision than of question in her tone.

The doctor thanked her, and concluded that as the night was so stormy, he would not return to the mainland.

And so it happened that the three tarried at Ravenswood with no knowledge of the alarming event that had occurred such little distance away.

The gentlemen were shown by Irene to a small, cozy parlor that lay just behind the grand parlor, and was used when the num-

ber of guests was not sufficient to render occupation of the latter necessary.

A bright fire was burning on the hearth, giving a cheerful aspect to the room. But as may be supposed, the party itself was not a cheerful one. The depression that rested upon the spirits of Frank Leighton was not to be lifted; and all present, of course, sympathized with him. Two or three of the visitors who had remained after Mrs. Wilburton's departure, had joined the little circle, but no attempt at social enjoyment beyond quiet conversation was made.

Mrs. Atherly, who was really concerned for the safety of Edith, notwithstanding the repeated assurances of Mrs. Montgomery that no apprehension for her personal welfare need be entertained, endeavored to cheer the desponding lover.

"Fair, treacherous creature! Had he known what cognizance she possessed of the sad case—had he dreamed of the hatred that still rankled in her heart against the betrothed of his friend, Philip Wayne, how he would have recoiled from her in amazement and repulsion."

For the passionate, unprincipled girl had learned not one tittle of her enmity against Flossie. Neither had she subdued nor attempted to subdue her wild, secret love for Philip.

This was the first time she had met him since his return from the hills. She had been longing to behold the man she loved, and had, in her own mind, bitterly reproached him for neglect of the common duties of friendship in not calling upon her soon after his arrival at his home. Lately she had distractedly concluded that he knew of her mad meeting with Flossie by the river. But now she was immensely relieved to know, as his manner proclaimed, that he was ignorant of what had there occurred. Otherwise as he was no dissembler, he could not have met her without a show of the feeling that such knowledge would naturally arouse.

Irene, therefore, rightly concluded that Flossie had kept silence. But how long would her despairful forbear to speak concerning that miserable affair? That was the agonizing question Irene was continually asking herself. If once the revelation were made to Philip she knew that he would be lost to her forever, and losing him she would lose all.

Her mother had intimated to her a few days before that the girl whom they both so dearly loved would soon be placed beyond the possibility of troubling them more. But the stroke was yet delayed. Why was the deed not done? On the morrow Philip would hasten to his betrothed, and the agents employed to effect the removal of Flossie might fail to separate them until she became his wife.

These were the thoughts that surged through the mind of the jealous Irene that night. She maintained a measurely calm exterior, but in her brain and bosom were tumult and distraction, not unmingled with a strange despairing joy.

For Philip Wayne was near her—he whom she so imagined in her heart. She looked upon him—she heard the tones of his voice—she felt in her being that mystic thrill which is experienced when love enters the presence of its object—and stronger than ever burned the fierce, volcanic passion that had now become the light of her life.

Philip had never appeared to her nobler, handsomer, manlier than he did that night. His bright, soulful face was grave in its expression, but the rich, melting light of his eyes was more dangerous to her peace than ever. Through the earnestness and seriousness of his nature even in that hour broke the full, free joyousness and winning vivacity that drew her so strongly to him.

Irene was conscious that she also looked well, and that Philip had not failed to note her charms. She had glanced in a mirror as she passed, and the reflection she there beheld had startled her—there was such a dark brightness in her eyes, such an enchanting color in her cheeks. She was startled because she feared she looked too well.

"I must calm myself," she said mentally, "this animation of look is unbecoming when the rest are so subdued. Frank Leighton will think that I am little grieved at the loss of my friend Edith, and Philip Wayne may be keen enough to guess the cause of my glowing mien. I must not betray myself to him. Ah, no! I know how hard it is for a man to give his love when he is aware that his preference is anticipated—that he needs not to strongly woo."

The evening, brief as it was, was a trial to Irene. Her joy in Philip's presence was only a sort of rapturous pain, and she felt relieved when he excused himself, and with the doctor's permission returned to the bedside of Starway. He would have gone sooner had it not been thought best to allow the wounded man an interval of repose after the first interview.

Philip found him sleeping restfully.

"I will watch by him to-night," he said to the attendant.

She could have known the appalling situation of her so dear to him and to his helpless friend, his rights would have been quickly abandoned, and to the storm that raged without his form would have been exposed.

CHAPTER XXIV.

EXCITING EVENTS.

Morning dawned at Ravenswood—dawned in gloom and gale, though the rain had nearly ceased after the flooding fall of the night. But the clouds still drove darkly in from the east, and the indications were that the storm had not yet spent its fury.

Notwithstanding the wet, windy morning, the inmates of Ravenswood were early astir, though on such dreary country households are wont to be slow in rising. But Mrs. Montgomery knew that Dr. Kirke and the two young men would desire to take their departure from the island as early as possible, and she had accordingly given orders to the servants the previous evening to rise with more than their usual alacrity, that

feeling. It is unusual to speak, Strother. If you go down, I shall go down, while if I do not, alone you can start immediately for a crew of men from T— to get down here with their apparatus and begin clearing out the old passage.

"You have seemed me in a sore strait, Everts," said his companion, with a tremble in his voice. "I feel the weight of your argument, but if anything should happen to you I should be consumed by eternal regrets."

"Have no fear," returned the young man. "I shall probably come out all right, and if I don't, there isn't an eye on all God's earth that would be wet for me. With you, how different! But time is precious, in an hour more they will be coming up."

Strother accompanied his friend to the shaft, shook hands lingeringly, spoke a word or two to the men who would attend upon the descending apparatus, and then throwing himself upon his horse he dashed off toward Tucson.

Everts had not descended half the length of the tunnel before he signalled to be drawn up. The used machine for lifting a load, carrying the men, was touched, the sides and could pass through. Without an instant's hesitation he seized upon the bucket ropes and was passed down into the mine, being obliged to hug his elbows snugly to his sides so as not to chafe the gradually closing walls. He signalled all right and for them to be ready to lower the buckets of provisions.

"Now, boys," he began, immediately, taking his position with an eye to probability, after the waving of his arm had attracted attention and stilled the picks. "I've come down to tell you that we are boxed in for tonight, and I want you to be ready for it."

The men dropped their implements and gathered around him, calling out—

"What the devil's to pay, Everts?"

"The shaft is caving in, and—"

"By—, I'll be up though," exclaimed a burly fellow, bare to the waist, as he sprang toward the mouth of the tunnel, the bucket of provisions was just coming down.

"Listen a moment," went on the intrepid fellow fiercely, motioning the crowding gang back. "Keep still, and the bucket may safely pass down food enough for our temporary imprisonment, and the mouth of the tunnel may not close so quickly, and that ventilation will go on and we be comparatively safe until the other shaft is open. A rush and a jar will bury us all in a living grave."

"It won't me!" burst out a herculean miner, pushing through the others, and pressing forward toward the tunnel, whose mouth was now closed. "The ventilation will go on and we be comparatively safe until the other shaft is open. A rush and a jar will bury us all in a living grave."

It was a fearful moment. The lamps stuck here and there in the crevices threw fantastic gleams upon the tunnel, whose mouth was now closed. The ventilation will go on and we be comparatively safe until the other shaft is open. A rush and a jar will bury us all in a living grave."

Within, for moments, no sound was heard but the heavy breathing of the excited gang, as the frightful possibilities of their surroundings dawned upon each mind. Without a word, the miner, whose face was now closed, the ventilation will go on and we be comparatively safe until the other shaft is open. A rush and a jar will bury us all in a living grave."

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"hit him on the snuff, Bill, right across the forehead. That's how him amidsips. Now clear his supper up," and a host of other jargon, but partly understood outside of a professional in the language.

An infernal uproar ensued. The heavy metal door was kicked up and screeched, half the lamps were upset and extinguished, and the guardian of the shaft dare not for an instant leave it. Here in the corner was alternately calling out for liquor, and raving with the pain of his wound, and swearing vengeance on the brave fellow who had shot him.

Everts glanced at his watch. Half-past one o'clock. The short summer night was passing rapidly away after all. But either owing to the excitement of the fight, which had been brought to an end by the one party being pommelled until he cried quarter, and the other pommelled him until his fury was spent—or for some other cause, the air was growing oppressive. One or two commented upon it; but Everts spoke out cheerily.

"The shaft is open, boys, don't get excited. They seemed even, but each hour showed a fearful lessening of the aperture."

Another hour passed, and then more began complaining of the stifled sensation.

"By—, I believe the old tunnel is stopped up," exclaimed one.

"It is, it is," called another and another.

"If Everts lies throttle him," came from the crowd.

"I tell the truth. The tunnel is yet open. Jimmy come up and place your hand here by the mouth and you will perceive a draught. Mind, do not touch the timbers."

"She gapes yet, boys," the gambler addressed.

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be my brother? I have an affection for you, stronger and closer and deeper than generally falls to man—tender and true, like a woman's love. Will you accept it?"

Everts, unconsciously affected, reached his hand across his knee, and gave it to his companion.

"What trouble your past life has known, I perhaps can neither mend nor mar; what your future brings of evil, if man can avert it, shall be lightened."

Everts still held the speaker's hand.

"I am moody and strange by times, and it is but right that you should know the cause. I can reveal it in a trite manner. I have nearly forewarned my kind. My wife, whom I trusted and idolized, eloped with another man."

Strother was astonished.

"Is it possible that you are a married man?"

"Am I then so much younger than yourself?" pointedly queried his companion.

"But you know—I never dreamed it?"

"Of course not, Strother. I do not wear my heart upon my sleeve."

Another silence fell between them, empty except, however, with the inconspicuous witnesses among the top-room loaves.

If Everts felt no inclination to continue the conversation his friend could not wonder, neither did he care to question him, doubting not his experience was nearly, if not quite, similar to that of others suffering like disappointments.

Strangely enough, too, after that night's confidence the matter was not referred to again. That adoption of the brotherhood was genuine, and felt by both, was evident in a nameless tie that bound them to each other with no common bond.

Neither can I hope to explain what course of reasoning or what train of thought, led Strother, on one occasion, to turn to his companion, and first ask forgiveness if his question should give him pain, then inquire if Everts were his real name.

"In part," was the reply, followed by the name of Everts.

But the information only clouded instead of clearing up whatever mystery there was revolving in the mind of the questioner. If he evinced any surprise, he did not explain it, but, in the privacy of his own room, he elphered distractedly through nearly all of the night upon a knotty problem, which, at last, he was forced to untangle itself.

By and by, it of a sudden uncoiled, and muttering "solved," Strother threw himself down upon his bed for an hour's sleep. His first act in the morning was to pen a hasty missive to his wife, and despatch it by a trustworthy carrier, instead of sending it by a letter, and perhaps not so safe mail stage, which would start in that direction only a few hours later.

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choked and stifled her. To some nature suspense is an unendurable torture; it was such to Miss March. Presently, however, the door opened. The black servant stood on the threshold and beckoned her out. She rose and walked forward into an apartment opening from the elegant waiting-room; a door closed behind her, and she stood alone with Doctor Eric Brandt.

The room itself was a marvel of magnificence. Miss March was an artist, and "good at her art for a woman," I was said, and nothing of all the costly blending of color there was lost upon her. She saw at a glance the black Venetian cabinets in the corners, the Old World paintings glimmering on the walls, the scarlet blaze of bloom painting against the glass door of a conservatory beyond the hall, the velvet, and, last of all, Doctor Brandt himself.

He was standing in a window fronting the street. At sound of her step he turned quickly. The two, man and woman, pale and physician, brought their faces to face, stood quite still, and looked at each other.

How a woman in deep mourning, warm and luxuriant of hair, and face not rich plain which is the admiration of gods and men—a woman with a thick, white, odorless skin, against which her lustrous hair looked preternaturally black, and grandly set eyes, like an Oriental.

She saw a man of thirty-five, slight, but muscular, his face as a marble mask under which a god or a devil might lurk—few could tell which. He had eyes of a light hazel color, lustrous as diamonds. Over his smooth, womanish forehead a mass of pale-yellow hair lay without wave or ripple. This was the great surgeon, with whom for reasons of sympathy, she had looked upon the human frame as an ingenious piece of mechanism which it was his pleasure and profit to understand—the man with the hand that never faltered, and the pulse that never quickened, who cared no more for quivering nerves and contracting muscles, for groans of anguish and faces convulsed with pain, than for the dead in the dissecting room awaiting his scalpel. Miss March threw back her veil; she was the first to speak.

"I come," she began, turning a shade paler, "to consult you regarding my eyes. I greatly fear that I am losing my sight."

He made a gesture for her to advance to the window. His voice when he spoke was full, sonorous, smooth as oil.

"A little nearer the light, if you please. When and how did this trouble begin? Be as exact as attainable."

He put out a white, velvety hand, and drew her close up to him. The light poured strong upon her face. She did not flinch. He looked down into her uplifted eyes. Pensive and his school need to paint such in the faces of their saints and angels—long and pale, like the typical eyes of the ancient Egyptians, the eyes of the woman of white, and a dark, dilating circle, soft as velvet. Through the round, black opening of the pupil, guarded only by a transparent membrane, Doctor Brandt gazed down, far down, to a silvery white point shining there—the nerve of sight spread out in tiny delicate ramifications. The focus of the retina.

"Three months ago I first began to study for the stage," she answered, and then proceeded to tell him how the blur and darkness had surprised her suddenly at her work; how ever since, at intervals, they had returned, gaining ground, it seemed, with every effort she made.

He listened, regarding her the while with singular intensity, and with a slight inflation of his delicate nostrils, the only sign of agitation his face ever expressed.

"You are studying for the stage?" he said, and his voice was full of keen disapproval. "May I ask your name and address?"

She gave both readily.

"Have you relatives?" he said.

"No."

"Friends?"

"No; I am alone in the world."

"No; I am alone in the world," he said, looking at her a little heavily. There was silence for a space.

"Well?" she cried out, sharply. "I can bear anything better than suspense. Let me know the worst."

"I do not consider the case incurable," he replied, slowly; "but it is one which demands absolute rest for an entire year, at least."

Here was a strong, proud face, not easily daunted or dismayed, but it grew a trifle paler at this.

"A year?" she echoed. "A year of rest? That would, indeed, be the death of all my hopes, and my fortune. How can I live without my work?"

He turned her, and stared out into the twilight street.

"Your danger is imminent," said Doctor Brandt, "and there is no medium course to be pursued in the matter."

She took the consultation fee from her purse.

"Then," she answered, "I have nothing to do but to bid you good night."

He wheeled around from the window. His tigerish, hazel eyes blazed full in hers.

"What do you mean by that? Does it, then, hurt you so sorely to abandon a profession which is damnable to all women?"

She colored faintly.

"To me the stage means bread," she answered. "I am poor. For years I have lived upon a yearly sum sent me by friends of my dead father. I am tired of charity, however kind."

"Then," he said, "I will give you, at least, or you would have sought my advice, he said, slowly. "And I know you, by instinct, by intuition—anything you will—but I know you. I seem to have known you all ways, and I entreat you to listen to me, Miss March, to heed my advice. I have given you a year, and I will give you a year more."

In full retreat across the room, she paused and looked back.

"And is this all?" she asked, despairingly.

"No," he answered, "it is not all. I shall see you again."

She turned the silver knob, and passed out into the waiting-room, still thronged with men and women, and a moment after stood alone on the fast-darkening pavement of the street without.

Homeward! The gas-lights began to flare in her tired eyes; she saw them, as through a glass, darkly. The fatal blur falls again between her and outward things. With difficulty she hastens on to the full old house which, sometimes in scorn and sometimes in unpeaking sadness of heart, she calls home. There are shabby genteel boarders there, and a sharp-eyed landlady, but not one of them all ever dares meddle with the ways of the great surgeon's household. She turns aside from the supper room and ascends to her own chamber. She lights a gas-jet, then slips to the portrait above the chimney-piece, applying to it her pale, intense face, from which the thick hair falls away like a cloud from a star.

"Papa," she sob, and her black robe figure drops heavily against the mantel, "there is no hope for me, none! I feel—I know it! I shall be blind—blind! And, oh! how am I to bear it, papa? How am I to live? Was not my life dreary enough without this new horror? I care, as I never did before—over and over again to-night, I curse the hand that killed you."

The look of a Medusa leaped into her face. Women like Miss March make good mothers as well as lovers. She stood for a long time gazing fixedly at the picture.

"Would it not be better, papa?" she whispered, as a faithful household maid came before her, blanching her face like snatching their breath away. "With such a future before me, should I be so much to blame?"

No answer from the placid portrait. She sat down at her window, and with her face pressed to the pane, looked forth upon the night. Far and wide gleamed the city lamps. Over the multitudinous roofs the frosty stars glimmered in the cold blue. But Agnes March saw none of them. With her mourning hat trailing by its ribbons from her hand, and her mourning-shawl still huddled about her shoulders, she sat on and on for hours, and fought her fierce battle with Apollyon, and lost.

Pale with the exhaustion of the conflict and the consciousness of defeat, she arose at last.

"Farewell, papa," she said to the portrait. "You will forgive me, I know. I feel as though I have been so unutterably dreary thing of late."

She did not, as before, kiss her hand to her treasure, but flung it only a strange, solemn smile, and then put on her hat, and descended a second time to the street. From the shadow of an opposite dwelling a figure stepped forth, and followed in her footstep as she hastened away; but she did not see it.

The harvest moon was rising in the sky, and its light fell in ghastly streaks along the pavement at her feet. She turned into Cambridge street, and approached the long bridge stretching across the river. She had once lived in this vicinity with her father, before he left her, to mend his ruined fortunes in the gold country of the West.

Back on her heart rushed the memory of that time; her inconsolable grief at parting; the utter anguish which overwhelmed her at news of his murder. With a shiver, Miss March drew her shawl closer about her, and hastened on.

The long bridge stretched away into the distance before her. She stepped upon it without pallor or shrinking—without a single backward look. The river rolled black as ink below. Near by some schooner lay at the tranquil wharves; the trim

